Santa Susana Field Lab (SSFL)
CEQA/Scoping Meeting
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What is CEQA?

A: The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is a statute that requires state and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible.

Q: When and why was CEQA enacted?

A: The impetus for CEQA can be traced to the passage of the first federal environmental protection statute in 1969, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In response to this federal law, the California State Assembly created the Assembly Select Committee on Environmental Quality to study the possibility of supplementing NEPA through state law. This legislative committee, in 1970, issued a report entitled *The Environmental Bill of Rights*, which called for a California counterpart to NEPA. Later that same year, acting on the recommendations of the select committee, the legislature passed, and Governor Reagan signed, the CEQA statute.

Q: Who must comply with CEQA?

A: CEQA applies to certain activities of state and local public agencies. A public agency must comply with CEQA when it undertakes an activity defined by CEQA as a "project." A project is an activity undertaken by a public agency or a private activity which must receive some discretionary approval (meaning that the agency has the authority to deny the requested permit or approval) from a government agency which may cause either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect change in the environment.

Most proposals for physical development in California are subject to the provisions of CEQA, as are many governmental decisions which do not immediately result in physical development (such as adoption of a general or community plan). Every development project which requires a discretionary governmental approval will require at least some environmental review pursuant to CEQA, unless an exemption applies.

Q: If it applies, what are the basic requirements of environmental review under CEQA?

A: The environmental review required imposes both procedural and substantive requirements. At a minimum, an initial review of the project and its environmental effects must be conducted. Depending on the potential effects, a further, and more substantial, review may be conducted in the form of an environmental impact report (EIR). A project may not be approved as submitted if feasible alternatives or mitigation measures are able to substantially lessen the significant environmental effects of the project.

Q: What are the CEQA Guidelines?

A: The Guidelines are the regulations that explain and interpret the law for both the public agencies required to administer CEQA and for the public generally. They are found in the California Code of Regulations, in Chapter 3 of Title 14. The Guidelines provide objectives, criteria and procedures for the orderly evaluation of projects and the preparation of environmental impact reports, negative declarations, and mitigated negative declarations by public agencies. The fundamental purpose of the Guidelines is to make the CEQA process comprehensible to those who administer it, to those subject to it, and to those for whose benefit it exists. To that end, the Guidelines are more than mere regulations which implement CEQA as they incorporate and interpret both the statutory mandates of CEQA and the principles advanced by judicial decisions.

Q: Who enforces CEQA? What role does the DTSC have in enforcement of CEQA?

A: CEQA is a self-executing statute. Public agencies are entrusted with compliance with CEQA and its provisions are enforced, as necessary, by the public through litigation and the threat thereof. While the DTSC is charged with the adoption of CEQA Guidelines, and may often assist public agencies in the interpretation of CEQA, it is each public agency's duty to determine what is and is not subject to CEQA. As such, the Resources Agency does not review the facts and exercise of discretion by public agencies in individual situations. In sum, the Agency does not enforce CEQA, nor does it review for compliance with CEQA the many state and local agency actions which are subject to CEQA.

Q: What is the purpose of the Notice of Preparation (NOP)?

A: The purpose of the NOP is to solicit input from agencies, organizations and the public on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR).

Q: What is the Draft PEIR and how does it affect the cleanup of the site?

A: The Draft PEIR will establish a framework for project-level environmental documents to be prepared to address further development and refinement of remediation approaches and actions.

Q: What is the "proposed project"?

A: The proposed project includes the activities necessary to implement soil and groundwater remediation at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory.

Q: What is the purpose of a scoping meeting?

A: The purpose of a public scoping meeting is to inform the public that the lead agency, the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) is evaluating a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and to solicit public comment regarding the type and extent of environmental analyses to be undertaken.

At the scoping stage, the sponsoring agency (DTSC) proposing the project has little information to provide to the public. The agency describes the preliminary concept of the project, and asks for feedback.

Q: What can you expect at a Scoping Meeting?

A: The public scoping meetings will consist of a formal presentation providing an overview of the CEQA process and of the proposed project.

Following the presentation, attendees will have an opportunity to provide oral comment recorded by a court reporter.

Outreach team representatives will be available to bring microphones to attendees wishing to comment from their seats, rather than requiring commenters to speak from a podium.

Q: Do you have to attend a Scoping Meeting to submit your comments?

A: The public has the option of submitting scoping comments orally and in writing at the Public Scoping Meeting or submitting written comments to the contact person by the date indicated via e-mail, fax, or mail. All comments received from the public, agencies, and organizations must be considered by the DTSC. Comments must be received by the last day of the posted public comment period (January 10, 2014).

Q: What are the next steps after the public scoping meetings?

A: Upon completion of the scoping process, all public comments will be organized and will be considered in the preparation of the Draft PEIR. The Draft PEIR will evaluate potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of soil and groundwater remediation methods at the site and will be used to inform decisions on the soil and groundwater remediation activities.

Draft PEIR Public Meetings: DTSC will hold a 45-day public comment on the Draft PEIR. During this time, DTSC will conduct a public meeting to present the Draft PEIR and provide an additional opportunity for public input. Public comments will be considered in the preparation of the Final PEIR.

Final PEIR: The Final PEIR will incorporate public input as appropriate and will include a 'Response to Comments' section that will include a response to each public comment.